

Message Text

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EXDIS
CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, US, XA
SUBJECT: BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY'S TRIP TO AFRICA:
OWEN-NKOMO MEETING

REF: STATE 80423

SUMMARY. THIS TELEGRAM REPORTS IN DETAIL FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S APRIL 10 DISCUSSION WITH JOSHUA NKOMO'S ZAPU-ZANU PATRIOTIC FRONT DELEGATION. OWEN ARGUED THE CASE FOR AN INFORMAL CONFERENCE WITH BROAD PARTICIPATION TO WORK OUT A CONSTITUTION UNDER WHICH ZIMBABWE WOULD ACCEDE TO INDEPENDENCE UNDER MAJORITY RULE IN 1978. HE URGED NKOMO TO PARTICIPATE. NKOMO BOTH CHALLENGED THE UTILITY OF TRYING TO HOLD A CONFERENCE AT ALL AND SPECIFICALLY OBJECTED TO THE INCLUSION OF NON-FIGHTING ELEMENTS ON THE AFRICAN SIDE. HE WAS STRONGLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT OWEN'S CONCEPT OF SUCH A CONFERENCE, BUT LEFT THE DOOR SLIGHTLY AJAR FOR PATRIOTIC FRONT PARTICIPATION. OWEN DID NOT GET MUCH
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BEYOND PUSHING THE OVERALL CONCEPT OF HOLDING NEGOTIATIONS. HE DID NOT ELABORATE MOST OF THE US-UK AGREED BASIC POINTS ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS (REFTEL). HE REPEATEDLY STRESSED US SUPPORT AS A CRUCIAL ELEMENT FOR HELPING OVERCOME THE KEY WEAKNESS THAT A NEGOTIATED CONSTITUTION MIGHT END UP AS MERELY A COMPLETED PAPER EXERCISE WITHOUT ANY REAL CONSEQUENCE IF SMITH

BALKED. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF RECEIVED DETAILED READ-OUT FROM FCO NOTE-TAKER AT 90-MINUTE APRIL 10 MEETING BETWEEN OWEN AND NKOMO. NOTETAKER WAS ONLY UK PARTICIPANT WHO WAS NOT TRAVELING WITH OWEN TO AFRICA. SINCE OWEN AND PARTY LEFT DIRECTLY FROM MEETING FOR AIRPORT, NOTETAKER WAS UNABLE TO CONVEY ANY REACTION TO MEETING BY UK PRINCIPALS. IN VIEW OF THE INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS CURRENTLY BEING UNDERTAKEN BY OWEN ON HIS TRIP, WE ARE REPORTING THE CONVERSATION IN EXTENSO AND SEQUENTIALLY IN ORDER TO CONVEY THE FULL FLAVOR OF OWEN'S PITCH AS WELL AS OF THE NKOMO/ZAPU/ZANU INITIAL REACTION.
2. NKOMO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DANIEL MADZIMBAMUTO (ZAPU FOREIGN AFFAIRS SECRETARY (?) AND SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO ZAPU PRESIDENT), MUKUDZEYI MUDZI (ZANU SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND MEMBER OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE), AND REX CHIWARA (ZANU REPRESENTATIVE IN WESTERN EUROPE).
3. OWEN OPENED BY MENTIONING THE MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE ENDING OF THE GENEVA TALKS AND SAID THAT AS FAR AS THE UK WAS CONCERNED, GENEVA WAS NOW "IN RECESS." THE TASK NOW AND THE BRITISH OBJECTIVE WAS TO GET INDEPENDENCE FOR ZIMBABWE WITH MAJORITY RULE BY 1978. HE EXPLAINED TWO REASONS FOR THE 1978 DATE: (A) IT WAS THE EARLIEST PRACTICABLE DATE FOR ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE BY DUE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES; (B) IF THERE WERE NO FIXED DATE, PEOPLE WOULD GIVE UP HOPE FOR MOVEMENT BY THE PEACEFUL ROUTE AND SEE NO ALTERNATIVE TO ARMED STRUGGLE. IT WAS NECESSARY TO LOOK AT THE
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CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES NOW IF THERE WAS TO BE INDEPENDENCE BY 1978. THESE PROCESSES WERE NECESSARY WHATSOEVER SMITH MIGHT DO. THE UK NEEDED TO ENACT SOME LEGISLATION IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION (WHICH BEGINS IN NOVEMBER) IN ORDER TO STICK TO THE 1978 DATE. THE QUESTION OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WAS NOW STALLED AND THE UK'S PROPOSALS (PRESENTED BY IVOR RICHARD) WERE STILL ON THE TABLE; THE UK WAS STILL PREPARED TO DISCUSS THEM BUT SAW NO GREAT HOPE OF SMITH AGREEING TO THEM. THEREFORE, IT WAS NOW NECESSARY TO DISCUSS THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS.

4. OWEN EXPLAINED THAT THE TYPE OF CONSTITUTIONAL DISCUSSION HE HAD IN MIND FOR THE FIRST STAGE WAS NOT A FORMAL ONE--A FORMAL CONFERENCE WOULD BE HELD LATER IN LONDON TO RATIFY WHAT WAS EARLIER DECIDED. AS FOR REPRESENTATION AT THIS FIRST STAGE, HE WANTED TO ASK ALL THOSE WHO HAD ATTENDED GENEVA. OWEN WOULD LIKE

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SMITH TO COME AND WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO GET HIM TO DO SO. BUT WHETHER HE CAME OR DID NOT COME, OR IF HE CAME AND ATTEMPTED TO BLOCK THE PROCESS, THERE WAS A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CONFERENCE OWEN NOW HAD IN MIND AND THE ONE AT GENEVA. GENEVA WAS ABOUT AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT OF WHICH SMITH WAS AN INTEGRAL PART. THEREFORE IT WAS EASIER FOR HIM TO BLOCK THE PROCESS, BUT THE PROPOSED CONFERENCE WAS ABOUT A CONSTITUTION WHICH, AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT WOULD BE FOR OWEN TO DECIDE WHETHER HE WANTED TO PUT BEFORE THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT. IT WAS IN OWEN'S INTEREST TO GET SOMETHING ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE, BUT EVERYONE DID NOT HAVE TO AGREE WITH ANY PART OR ALL OF IT. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS THAT MAJORITY VIEWS HAD TO BE REFLECTED IN THE CONFERENCE.

5. OWEN POINTED OUT THAT THE WEAKEST LINK WAS HOW TO CHANGE A PAPER CONSTITUTION INTO A REAL CONSTITUTION IF SMITH DIDN'T COLLABORATE. THE BRITISH HAD BEEN RELUCTANT TO GO THIS ROUTE BEFORE BECAUSE THEY REALIZED THE PRESSURES THEY WOULD BE UNDER TO IMPLEMENT ANY AGREEMENT. OWEN RULED OUT USE OF ANY BRITISH

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TROOPS. WHAT HE DID OFFER, TO MAKE THE CONFERENCE MORE CREDIBLE AND TO GIVE IT MORE AUTHORITY, WAS THE SUPPORT OF THE USG. HE COULD STILL NOT GUARANTEE THAT THE CONSTITUTION WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED, BUT THERE WAS A MUCH GREATER LIKELIHOOD WITH US SUPPORT AND AS A RESULT OF THIS TYPE OF CONFERENCE. HE WASN'T OFFERING ANY FINAL BLUEPRINT, BUT WANTED NKOMO'S REACTIONS TO THE GENERAL IDEA--WHETHER HE WAS PREPARED TO ATTEND, WHERE THE CONFERENCE SHOULD BE HELD, WHAT ISSUES SHOULD BE DISCUSSED.

6. NKOMO MADE IT CLEAR AT THE OUTSET THAT HE WAS SPEAKING AT THIS MEETING FOR THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S POSITION WAS THAT BEFORE THEY COULD CONSIDER ANY CONFERENCE, THEY WOULD HAVE TO KNOW WHAT THE UK MEANT BY IT. HE RECOUNTED THE COMPLAINTS ABOUT PARTICIPANTS NOT BEING CONSULTED ABOUT THE ENDING OF GENEVA--WHICH WAS NOT IN RECESS, BUT RATHER WAS DEAD. THE WAY THE UK ENDED IT SHOWED THERE HAD NEVER REALLY BEEN ANY CONFERENCE. (NOTETAKER'S COMMENT: ALL THIS WAS SAID NOT IN ANGER, BUT MORE AS A SORROWFUL RECITATION OF FACT.) BRITAIN'S ENDING OF GENEVA SHOWED THERE WAS NOTHING BRITAIN COULD DO, WAR WAS THE WAY TO CONTINUE AND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ACCEPTED THAT CHALLENGE AND ALL IT MEANT. BEFORE THERE COULD BE ANY OTHER CONFERENCE, CERTAIN THINGS HAD TO BE AGREED. PRIMARILY, THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE AGREEMENT THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTED IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA; THAT IT WAS NOT A MERE SITUATION OF DECOLONIZATION, NOR A SIMPLE POLITICAL SITUATION, BUT A STATE OF WAR. PARTICIPANTS IN ANY CONFERENCE WOULD HAVE TO BE PARTICIPANTS IN THE WAR AND NO OTHERS.

7. NKOMO THEN RECOUNTED HOW PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO NEGOTIATE HAD ALL FAILED. FOR 30 YEARS HE HAD BEEN PREPARED TO TALK. GENEVA SHOWED THAT THE BRITISH HAD NO PLAN FOR RHODESIA. SINCE THE PRESENT PROPOSALS OFFERED NO GUARANTEE, THIS WOULD BE ANOTHER WASTE OF TIME. SMITH
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WOULD NOT CHANGE, NOT EVEN WITH ALL THE PRESSURES THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION COULD BRING.

8. OWEN REITERATED HIS POSITION ON GENEVA, RECOGNIZED NKOMO'S FEELINGS, BUT DIDN'T FEEL ONE SHOULD GET STUCK ON THIS. NEITHER DID HE KNOW WHAT NKOMO MEANT BY THE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT A STATE OF WAR EXISTED. HE THOUGHT NKOMO WOULD BE WRONG NOT TO USE THE PATH OF A CONFERENCE TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL INDEPENDENCE. THE PATH OF VIOLENCE WOULD EVENTUALLY SUCCEED, BUT IT WOULD TAKE LONGER AND BE MORE DESTRUCTIVE THAN NKOMO THOUGHT. OWEN SAID HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CHAIR THE CONFERENCE AS

NECESSARY--BUT MUCH OF THE TIME WOULD BE OCCUPIED IN TECHNICAL DISCUSSION. AS TO PARTICIPANTS, WHAT DID NKOMO MEAN BY HIS REMARK? NKOMO REPLIED THAT HE MEANT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, SMITH, AND "BRITAIN OBLIQUELY" (WHICH HE ADDED AS AFTERTHOUGHT).

9. OWEN EXPLAINED THAT HE COULD NOT HOLD A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE THAT DID NOT REFLECT ALL SHADES OF OPINION. IF IT DID NOT, HE COULD NOT GET THE RESULTING CONSTITUTION THROUGH BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE CURRENT UK GOVERNMENT WAS QUITE LIKELY TO REMAIN IN POWER UNTIL 1979, BUT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE LIMITATION ON ITS ROOM FOR MANEUVER. AT ANY RATE HE PERSONALLY WAS NOT PREPARED TO PUT A CONSTITUTION BEFORE PARLIAMENT WHICH HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJORITY OPINION. THERE WAS THEREFORE NO WAY TO GET A CONSTITUTION OFF THE

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GROUND WITH THE LIMITED PARTICIPATION NKOMO WAS SUGGESTING. OWEN SAID THAT IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, IF NKOMO BELIEVES IN DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS (NKOMO: "YES, THAT WILL COME"), THEN PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE WILL PARTICIPATE AND MAY EVEN CARRY THE DAY.
10. NKOMO COMPLAINED THAT OWEN'S PROPOSED APPROACH APPEARED TO BYPASS THE WAR AS A FACTOR. HE WAS NOT SUGGESTING THAT ANYONE IN PARTICULAR SHOULD BE LEFT OUT OF

THE CONFERENCE, BUT IT WAS HARD TO HAVE AGREEMENT BEFOREHAND AS TO WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE WAR. OWEN REITERATED THAT IT WAS NOT NECESSARY TO KEEP GENEVA AS THE SITE OF A CONFERENCE, NOR TO KEEP ITS FORMAT, BUT PARTICIPATION MUST BE BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE. THEREFORE HE WELCOMED NKOMO'S IDEAS. NKOMO REPLIED HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY MORE IDEAS ON THE SUBJECT. THE CONFERENCE WOULD COME WHEN PEOPLE, I.E., SMITH, REALIZE THEY CANNOT WIN THE WAR, WHEN THEY START BEING MORE REALISTIC AND START LOOKING AT THE ISSUES.

11. NKOMO THEN ASKED WHAT PRESSURES COULD BE BROUGHT ON SMITH. OWEN SAID SMITH WOULD FIND HIM (OWEN) TOUGHER THAN OTHERS HAD BEEN, TO WHICH NKOMO RETORTED,
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"BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO USE TROOPS, HOW TOUGH CAN YOU BE?" OWEN RESPONDED THAT THE UK ALONE COULD NOT DELIVER, BUT HE WAS OFFERING SOMETHING THAT WOULD HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE WORLD. HE WOULD LIKE SMITH TO COME TO THE CONFERENCE, BUT THE CONFERENCE WOULD NOT FAIL TO TAKE PLACE IF SMITH DID NOT COME. HE WANTED SMITH THERE SINCE IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO AGREE NOT ONLY ON A CONSTITUTION, BUT ALSO ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND DATE. THE SITUATION WAS CHANGING AND PRESSURES ON SMITH WERE GROWING. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE THAT INDEPENDENCE WOULD COME AFTER THIS PROCESS, THE ALTERNATIVE WAS WAR. IT WAS UP TO NKOMO TO DECIDE.

12. MUDZI ASKED WHAT ROLE THE US WOULD PLAY IN THE CONFERENCE? HE WONDERED WHETHER THERE WOULD NOT BE ANOTHER VIETNAM SITUATION. OWEN ASKED WHAT ROLE MUDZI WOULD LIKE THE US TO PLAY. HE EXPLAINED THAT AMERICAN IDENTIFICATION WITH THE CONFERENCE WOULD GIVE IT GREATER STRENGTH, ALTHOUGH ANYTHING THAT WAS AGREED WOULD HAVE TO GO THROUGH THE UK PARLIAMENT.

13. MUDZI THEN ASKED WHAT EUROPEANS OTHER THAN SMITH DID OWEN THINK WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE CONFERENCE. OWEN REPLIED THAT PARTICIPATION WOULD BE ROUGHLY THE SAME AS AT GENEVA, BUT IN ADDITION HE WAS OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS. HE WOULD NOT, HOWEVER, ACCEPT VETOS FROM ANYONE ABOUT PARTICIPATION. HE WOULD BE THE ONE TO DECIDE. THE IMPORTANT THING WAS TO SHOW THAT HE HAD TRIED TO GET ALL SHADES OF OPINION INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS. IF SOME CHOSE NOT TO ATTEND, THAT WAS UP TO THEM.

14. MADZIMBAMUTO POINTED OUT TWO DANGEROUS WEAKNESSES IN THE EXERCISE: (A) NO ONE WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO ENFORCE THE CONSTITUTION; AND (B) THE "TRIGGER MECHANISM" IN ANY BILL THAT WENT THROUGH PARLIAMENT. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF ANOTHER PARTY CAME TO POWER IN

THE UK, SMITH WERE STILL IN POWER, AND THE NEW UK

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GOVERNMENT ACTIVATED THE TRIGGER AND GAVE SMITH INDEPENDENCE? OWEN REPLIED THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A CLEARLY DEFINED ELECTORAL PROCESS INVOLVED WITH THE TRIGGER, THAT THERE WOULD BE ELECTIONS BEFORE ANY INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT. MADZIMBAMUTO SAID SMITH COULD ARREST ALL THE OPPOSITION AND GET HIS CHIEFS ELECTED. OWEN DOUBTED THAT SMITH WOULD BE STRONG ENOUGH TO DO THAT.

15. NKOMO WANTED TO KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE PATRIOTIC FRONT TROOPS. OWEN SAID THAT WOULD BE FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE AFTER THE ELECTION. NKOMO ASKED WHETHER IT COULD BE AGREED FOR THE TROOPS TO BE ALLOWED IN BEFORE THE ELECTION, TO WHICH OWEN RESPONDED THAT THE QUESTION WAS NOT REALLY ABOUT AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT BUT RATHER ABOUT SOME FORM OF SUPERVISION TO CONTROL ELECTIONS. THE TROOPS WOULD RETURN AND VOTE DURING THOSE ELECTIONS.

16. NKOMO ASKED WHAT WOULD BE THE STARTING DATE OF OWEN'S CONCEPT OF TWO YEARS. OWEN SAID THAT COULD BE DISCUSSED. INDEPENDENCE WOULD BE SOMETIME IN 1978, BUT NOT JANUARY 1 SINCE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES WOULD TAKE LONGER THAN THAT.

17. TO OWEN'S COMMENT THAT NKOMO MIGHT NOT LIKE HIS PROPOSAL, BUT HE WOULD AT LEAST UNDERSTAND WHAT ELSE THERE WAS, NKOMO RESPONDED THAT IT WAS NOT A MATTER OF LIKING IT, BUT RATHER OF QUESTIONING WHETHER IT WAS

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PRACTICAL. HE SAID OWEN HAD RULED OUT TROOPS, HAD OFFERED INSTEAD THE AUTHORITY OF THE US. THIS INVOLVED DANGERS--AT THIS POINT HE ALLUDED TO THE CIA. TO OWEN'S REPLY THAT THIS WAS SOMETHING THE UK COULD NOT DO ALONE, NKOMO COMMENTED THAT WAS WHY THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WAS SAYING THE UK SHOULD REST AND LET THE PF GET ON WITH THE ARMED STRUGGLE. OWEN REMARKED THAT THE UK WAS EXPOSING ITSELF MORE THAN SOME THOUGHT WISE BY THESE PROPOSALS. HE ALSO POINTED OUT IT WAS NOT A QUESTION OF JUST THE UK AND THE US, BUT HE WOULD ALSO INVOLVE THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE UN.

18. MADZIMBAMUTO COMPLAINED THAT THE UK PROPOSALS WERE "TETHERING THE CONSTITUTION." FOR EXAMPLE, A CONSTITUTION MIGHT BE AGREED, PRESSURES MIGHT FAIL TO DISLODGE SMITH, THE ARMED STRUGGLE WOULD CONTINUE AND BE WON, AND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT COULD THEN FIND THEMSELVES STUCK WITH THE ORIGINAL CONSTITUTION. OWEN REPLIED THAT DURING THE PROCESS HE WOULD TRY TO GET SMITH TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT FOR AN INDEPENDENCE DATE. HE WOULD NOT UNDERTAKE THAT JUST YET, BUT THOUGHT
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THINGS WOULD CHANGE FOR THE BETTER IN THE NEXT SIX TO NINE MONTHS.

19. AFTER NKOMO COMPLAINED ABOUT INVOLVEMENT OF UK COMPANIES IN BREAKING OIL SANCTIONS, OWEN SAID THERE WERE CERTAIN THINGS HE TOO COMPLAINED ABOUT. HE ASKED, HOWEVER, IF NKOMO PREFERRED THAT THE UK PULL OUT AND WASH ITS HANDS OF RHODESIA--OR SHOULD THE UK STAY IN THE BATTLE, LIVE UP TO ITS CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS AND "STRENGTHEN ITS ARM" (I.E., THROUGH US SUPPORT). NKOMO REPLIED HE HAD WANTED THE UK AT GENEVA TO STRENGTHEN ITS ARM AND APPOINT A RESIDENT COMMISSIONER. OWEN REPEATED THAT THE UK COULD ONLY OVERCOME THE CENTRAL WEAKNESS OF ITS PROPOSALS WITH US HELP. MUDZI AGAIN ASKED WHAT TYPE OF US INVOLVEMENT WAS ENVISAGED. WOULD IT LEAD TO ANOTHER VIETNAM WITH THE BIG POWERS CONVERGING ON THE TWO SIDES? OWEN REPLIED THAT THE US RECOGNIZED THESE ANXIETIES. HE DID NOT THINK THE US WOULD BE PUTTING TROOPS ON THE

GROUND, BUT IT HAD OTHER WAYS OF BRINGING PRESSURES WHICH WERE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN THOSE OF THE UK ALONE. HE REFERRED TO THE MOVEMENT THAT DR. KISSINGER HAD ACHIEVED.

20. AT THIS POINT, NKOMO SAID OWEN SHOULD GO TO AFRICA, TALK TO PEOPLE AND LISTEN TO THEM, BUT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT FELT STRONGLY ABOUT THIS. BRITAIN HAD SHOWN ALL ALONG THAT IT WAS UNABLE TO GET THINGS GOING IN RHODESIA. HE WAS, HOWEVER, OPEN TO BEING CONVINCED OF THE NECESSITY AND POSSIBILITY OF A CONFERENCE AND HOPED IT WOULD SUCCEED, BUT AS OF NOW HE DID NOT SEE HOW THE UK COULD GET THROUGH THIS TIME. HE DID NOT WANT TO MAKE OWEN'S TASK MORE DIFFICULT, BUT WAS MINDFUL OF PEOPLE IN ZIMBABWE AND DID NOT WANT TO GIVE THEM UNFOUNDED HOPE.

21. OWEN SUMMED UP POINTS WHICH HE PERCEIVED AS CRUCIAL TO PATRIOTIC FRONT THINKING: THEY DISTRUSTED SMITH AND DID NOT BELIEVE HIS COMMITMENT TO MAJORITY
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RULE WITHIN TWO YEARS (BUT IF SMITH IS COMMITTED, THIS IS PATH THAT SHOULD BE USED); AND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WAS RELUCTANT TO SEE ANYTHING SHAKE THE ENTHUSIASM FOR WAR AMONG ITS SUPPORTERS FOR A PAPER PLAN THAT MIGHT NOT MATERIALIZE (BUT HE THOUGHT NKOMO SHOULD ATTEND THE CONFERENCE--NO ONE LOST ANYTHING BY PARTICIPATION). OWEN RECOGNIZED THE MAIN WEAKNESS OF HIS PROPOSAL, BUT HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO GET VORSTER TO GET SMITH TO STICK WITH THE COMMITMENT TO MAJORITY RULE WITHIN TWO YEARS AND TO AGREE TO MAJORITY RULE IN 1978. NKOMO HAD TO ASK HIMSELF WHAT WAS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE CONFERENCE, WHAT DID HE HAVE TO LOSE.

22. NKOMO SAID HE WANTED TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT MEANT BY ITS POSITION ON REPRESENTATION AT THE CONFERENCE. HE THOUGHT OWEN WAS ASKING TOO MUCH BY ASKING HIM TO COME TO A CONFERENCE WITH PEOPLE WHO REPRESENTED NOTHING, TO HAVE A CONFERENCE WITH A COLLECTION OF OPPORTUNISTS ALONGSIDE PEOPLE WHO HAD FOUGHT FOR YEARS. "THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IS INVOLVED AND THEREFORE THEY COMPLICATE MATTERS FOR US. BUT YOU ARE THE CONVENER, INVITE WHOM YOU LIKE." TO WHICH OWEN SAID, "PLEASE COME WHEN I ASK YOU TO ATTEND." MADZIMBAMUTO THEN BURST OUT IN EITHER REAL OR FEIGNED ANGER, SAYING THAT WHAT THE UK WAS ASKING WAS AN INSULT, LUMPING FIGHTERS TOGETHER WITH SMITH'S TAME CHIEFS. OWEN RESPONDED THAT HE HAD ONLY BEEN

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TALKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THOSE WHO HAD BEEN AT GENEVA, TO WHICH NKOMO RETORTED THAT AT GENEVA THERE WAS A BUNCH OF BISHOPS AND REVERENDS WHO KNEW NOTHING. 23. DESPITE THIS LIVELY CLOSING EXCHANGE, THE MEETING ENDED WITH PARTICIPANTS DEPARTING AMICABLY AND WITHOUT ACRIMONY.

24. COMMENT:

IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW HOW CIRCUMSCRIBED NKOMO WAS BY THE PRESENCE OF ZANU REPRESENTATIVES AT THE MEETING AND HIS NEED THROUGHOUT TO SPEAK EXPLICITLY FOR THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE JANUARY, NKOMO AT LEAST DISPLAYED NO SIGN OF ANIMOSITY IN DIRECT CONTACTS WITH THE BRITISH. OWEN AND NKOMO WERE ABLE TO TALK BLUNTLY WITH ONE ANOTHER WITHOUT ACRIMONY AND SEEMED TO MAKE THEMSELVES UNDERSTOOD. THE DISCUSSION WAS ESSENTIALLY LIMITED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF HOLDING AN INFORMAL CONFERENCE TO WORK OUT A CONSTITUTION. IT DID NOT GET INTO THE CONTENT OF A CONSTITUTION, NOR DID OWEN EVEN TOUCH UPON MOST OF THE POINTS JOINTLY AGREED BETWEEN THE US AND THE UK

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(REFTEL). THERE WAS NO SPECIFIC MENTION OF US

"CO-SPONSORSHIP" OF THE CONFERENCE ITSELF, THOUGH OWEN LAID GREAT STRESS ON US WILLINGNESS TO APPLY PRESSURE TO GIVE A CONFERENCE AUTHORITY AND MAKE ITS RESULTS STICK.

OWEN SEEMED TO BE STRETCHING HIS BRIEF (LONDON 5823) BY HIS REPEATED EMPHASIS, UNEQUIVOCALLY STATED, THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO GO AHEAD WITH A CONFERENCE WHETHER SMITH CAME ABOARD OR NOT. THIS APPROACH PRESUMABLY WAS MERELY TACTICAL.

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Status: NATIVE
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